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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR S/GWI AMBASSADOR VERVEER AND SGHORI
DEPT FOR SCA/INSE, SCA/RA JMAZZONE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KWMN](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH NOMINEE FOR THE 2010 SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE

REF: A) STATE 111471, B) DHAKA 1057

Summary

1. For her work in defending the legal and human rights of the women of Bangladesh, U.S. Mission Dhaka nominates Salma Ali for the 2010 Secretary of State's Award for International Woman of Courage. Through her legal and humanitarian work, Ali has fiercely championed the rights of women and children in this Muslim-majority nation of 150 million people. Her strength and dedication have saved, hundreds, if not thousands, of women and children from the dangers of trafficking, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and unlawful imprisonment.

Justification

2. Salma Ali, a lawyer and human rights activist, has worked tirelessly on behalf of women and children in Bangladesh for the last three decades. She has fought for victims of a wide range of injustices, including trafficking, forced labor, acid attacks, unlawful imprisonment, and domestic violence. An examination of any women's rights issue in Bangladesh will reveal contributions by Ali.

3. Ali is Executive Director of the Bangladesh Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) and Chairwoman of the Bangladesh chapter of Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC). Under Ali's leadership BNWLA provides a broad range of services to women and girls. BNWLA operates legal aid clinics and 24-hour hotlines all over Bangladesh for women and girls who are the victims of violence and abuse. Not content with just rendering legal assistance, Ali and BNWLA run shelters for victimized women and children. BNWLA rescues victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced labor and unlawful imprisonment. Ali has helped to repatriate a large number of survivors of trafficking from abroad.

4. Ali and BNWLA work with the Government of Bangladesh to strengthen the ability of government officials to properly handle cases involving the violation of women's rights. They have trained scores of officials, including police, military and local leaders, on such issues as child marriage, forced marriage, dowry, acid attacks, domestic violence, labor rights and trafficking.

5. Ali is a vocal leader within Bangladesh's legal community, continually challenging the courts to strengthen legal protections for women and girls. She took on the practice of "safe custody," in which the courts imprisoned - sometimes for years - girls found in brothels or on the streets. Given that Bangladesh's penal system has limited facilities for women, most girls taken into "safe custody" ended up in the general populations of Bangladesh prisons, where they frequently were victims of abuse. Ali has secured the release of scores of girls trapped in legal limbo, in some cases reuniting them with their families and in others assisting them with rehabilitation.

¶6. For all these efforts and more, US Mission Dhaka nominates Salma Ali of Bangladesh for the 2010 International Women of Courage Award.

Mission Dhaka has contacted Ali, who said she would be honored to be nominated for this award.

Biographic Details

¶7. Bio data requested ref A follow:

Name: Salma Ali

Job Title/Association: Executive Director, Bangladesh Women Lawyer's Association (BNWLA)

Date of Birth: February 26, 1949

Country of Birth: then Pakistan (now Bangladesh)

Citizenship: Bangladesh

Address: BNWLA, Monico-Mina Tower, 49/3 West Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh

Telephone: +8802-811-2858

Fax: +8802-812-5866

Email: bnwla@bdonline.com

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Passport No.: Forthcoming

Languages spoken: Bangla, English

Mission Women's Issues Officer

¶8. For more information about this nomination, please contact Deputy Pol/Econ Chief Heather Variava at VariavaHC@state.gov.

DEAN